

2001 Participation and Activity Limitation Survey: Issue 9—Profile of the Housing Conditions of Canadian Children with Disabilities

INTRODUCTION

This *Research Highlight* is one in a series of Research Highlights that examine the housing conditions and characteristics of Canadians with disabilities. It focuses on children (under 15 years old) with disabilities. Data used in this highlight are from the 2001 Participation and Activity Limitation Survey (2001 PALS). The PALS is Canada's principal national survey focusing on persons with disabilities. For children, it provides information on the prevalence and severity of disability; on the use of, and unmet need for, supports; and on the impact of disability on the child's family and on the child's participation in various everyday activities.

DEFINITIONS

Population with Disabilities Examined in this Highlight

This highlight examines the population of children under 15 years. The data presented here will differ from the first issue in this series because of some key differences between the 2001 Census and 2001 PALS with respect to identifying people with disabilities. The 2001 PALS identifies an estimated 96,000 fewer children under 15 years with a disability than the 2001 Census of Population. This is because some children, who were identified on the Census as having a disability, were identified as not having a disability in the responses to the more detailed questions on the 2001 PALS related to specific types of disabilities. It is also due to differences in the geographic coverage — the 2001 Census includes the territories and people living in First Nations communities, but these areas and their populations are excluded from the 2001 PALS.

Disability in the 2001 PALS

The 2001 PALS asks about specific domains of functioning in which a child may experience ongoing difficulties doing activities that are relevant for the child's age. Disabilities are identified differently for very young children (under 5 years) and for children aged five to 14 years.

For children under five years, disability is identified:

- through the presence of one or more chronic conditions such as asthma, cerebral palsy or complex medical needs that limit the kind or amount of activity in which the child can participate;
- as difficulty hearing;
- as difficulty seeing;
- through a developmental delay; and/or
- through a general limitation in their ability to participate in activity normal for a child his/her age.

For children aged from five to 14 years inclusive, disability is identified:

- through the presence of one or more chronic conditions that limit the kind or amount of activity in which the child can participate;
- as difficulty hearing;
- as difficulty seeing;
- as a learning disability;
- as a speaking/communicating disability;

Research Highlight

2001 Participation and Activity Limitation Survey: Issue 9—Profile of the Housing Conditions of Canadian Children with Disabilities

- as a mobility disability;
- as an emotional/psychological disability;
- as a developmental disability or disorder;
- as an agility disability; and/or
- through a general limitation in their ability to participate in activity normal for a child his/her age.

Core Housing Need

Households¹ are considered to be in core housing need if they do not live in and do not have sufficient income to access acceptable housing. The term "acceptable housing" refers to housing that is in adequate physical condition, of suitable size and affordable.

- Adequate dwellings are those reported by their residents as not requiring any major repairs.
- Suitable dwellings have enough bedrooms for the size and make-up of resident households, according to the National Occupancy Standard (NOS) requirements.²
- Affordable dwellings cost less than 30% of before-tax household income.³

A household is said to be in core housing need if its housing

falls below at least one of the adequacy, suitability or affordability standards and it would have to spend 30% or more of its before-tax income to pay the median rent of alternative local housing.

Not all households are included in the calculation of core housing need. Farm, band and reserve households are excluded because shelter costs for these households are not collected by the Census. Also, housing conditions cannot be assessed for households that report shelter costs that exceed their income or households that have incomes of zero or less.⁴ Since CMHC regards the housing conditions for these households as not interpretable, they are excluded from the assessment of housing conditions.

FINDINGS

General Characteristics of Children with Disabilities Under 15 Years Old

Geography

There are an estimated 175,900 children under the age of 15 with disabilities in Canada resulting in a national disability rate of 3%. There is some variation among the provinces, with Quebec recording the lowest rate at 2% and Alberta the highest at 4% (see Table 1).

¹ Refers to all private households. People living in collective dwellings (see Statistics Canada, 2001 Census Dictionary, Cat. No. 92-378-XIE, pages 190-193) are excluded by definition.

² According to the NOS, enough bedrooms means one bedroom for each cohabitation adult couple; unattached household member 18 years of age and over; same-sex pair of children under age 18; and additional boy or girl in the family, unless there are two opposite sex siblings under 5 years of age, in which case they are expected to share a bedroom. A household of one individual can occupy a bachelor unit (i.e. a unit with no bedroom).

³ Shelter costs include the following:

- For renters, rent and payments for electricity, fuel, water and other municipal services; and
- For owners, mortgage payments (principal and interest), property taxes, and any condominium fees, along with payments for electricity, fuel, water and other municipal services. Costs associated with maintenance and repairs are not considered part of shelter costs.

⁴ Shelter costs are not collected by the Census for farm households since carrying costs for farm residences are not always separable from expenses related to other farm structures; nor for reserve households whose housing costs are paid through band housing arrangements. Of the 30,007,094 million people identified in the 2001 Census, 27,696,215 million lived in non-farm, non-reserve households with interpretable shelter cost-to-income ratios (STIRs). Income data collected by the 2001 Census refer to the calendar year preceding the Census, while shelter cost data give expenses for the current year. STIRs are computed directly from these data by comparing the current shelter cost to income from the previous year.

Table 1 Number of children under 15 years old in Canada and the provinces, 2001

	With disabilities	Without disabilities	Disability rate
CANADA	175,900	5,176,300	3.3%
Newfoundland and Labrador	2,800	81,800	3.3%
Prince Edward Island	900	25,000	3.5%
Nova Scotia	6,100	154,600	3.8%
New Brunswick	4,300	122,900	3.4%
Quebec	26,800	1,227,400	2.1%
Ontario	75,700	2,090,600	3.5%
Manitoba	7,400	174,000	4.1%
Saskatchewan	5,300	141,700	3.6%
Alberta	22,000	507,900	4.2%
British Columbia	24,700	650,400	3.7%

Source: 2001 PALS

Age and Gender

The rate of disability increases with age and is higher among boys than girls (see Table 2).

Nature of Disabilities

The 2001 PALS includes number and types of disabilities that the child has, and a severity measure that includes the nature and extent of the child's disability across all the types of disabilities reported for the child.

Table 2 Number of children under 15 years old, by disability status, age group and sex, 2001

	With disabilities			Without disabilities			Disability rate		
	Boys	Girls	Both sexes	Boys	Girls	Both sexes	Boys	Girls	Both sexes
Birth to 14 years	110,800	65,100	175,900	2,632,500	2,543,800	5,176,300	4.0%	2.5%	3.3%
0 - 4	15,800	10,000	25,800	796,200	760,400	1,556,600	1.9%	1.3%	1.6%
5 - 9	43,800	24,600	68,400	905,200	876,800	1,782,100	4.6%	2.7%	3.7%
10-14	51,200	30,500	81,700	931,100	906,600	1,837,600	5.2%	3.3%	4.3%

Source: 2001 PALS

Children under five years old

Among children under 5 years old with a disability, developmental delay is identified for 68%, and 62% have at least one chronic condition⁵ (see Table 3).

Of the 16,100 children under five with chronic conditions, almost half (46%) have asthma or severe allergies that limit the kind or amount of activity that the child can undertake (see Table 4).

Table 3 Number of children under 5 years old, by type of disability, 2001

Type of disability	(Number)	(%)
All types of disabilities*	25,800	100.0%
Chronic condition(s)	16,100	62.4%
Hearing	3,100	12.0%
Seeing	2,000	7.8%
Developmental delay	17,500	67.8%
General limitation	24,200	93.8%

* A child can report more than one chronic condition; therefore, the percentages may add up to more than 100.

⁵ See Table 4 for list of chronic conditions.

Research Highlight

2001 Participation and Activity Limitation Survey: Issue 9—Profile of the Housing Conditions of Canadian Children with Disabilities

Table 4 Number of children under 5 years old, by type of chronic condition, 2001

Type of chronic condition	(Number)	(%)
Total*	16,100	100.0%
Asthma or severe allergies	7,400	46.0%
Heart condition or disease	1,400	8.7%
Diabetes	1,500	9.3%
Autism	2,200	13.7%
Cerebral Palsy	2,900	18.0%
Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) or Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)	2,000	12.4%
Down Syndrome	1,400	8.7%
Complex medical care needs	3,100	19.3%
Any other long-term condition that has been diagnosed by a health professional	7,000	43.5%

* A child can report more than one chronic condition; therefore, the percentages may add up to more than 100.

Table 5 Number of children aged 5 to 14 years old, by type of disability, 2001

Type of disability	(Number)	(%)
All types of disabilities*	150,000	100.0%
Chronic condition(s)	97,900	65.3%
Hearing	20,300	13.5%
Seeing	14,200	9.5%
Learning	97,700	65.1%
Speaking/communicating	64,400	42.9%
Mobility	20,100	13.4%
Emotional/psychological	48,000	32.0%
Developmental disability or disorder	45,100	30.1%
Agility	30,300	20.2%
General limitation	139,300	92.9%

* A child can report more than one chronic condition; therefore, the percentages may add up to more than 100.

Children five to 14 years old

Chronic condition(s) and learning disabilities are each reported for 65% of children aged 5 to 14 years old (see Table 5).

Of the 97,900 children aged 5 to 14 with a chronic condition, 48% have asthma or severe allergies and 45% have ADD/ADHD (see Table 6).

Table 6 Number of children age 5 to 14 years old, by type of chronic condition, 2001

Type of chronic condition	(Number)	(%)
Total*	97,900	100.0%
Asthma or severe allergies	47,000	48.0%
Heart condition or disease	7,700	7.9%
Kidney condition or disease	3,000	3.1%
Cancer	1,400	1.4%
Diabetes	2,800	2.9%
Epilepsy	6,200	6.3%
Autism	12,500	12.8%
Cerebral Palsy	6,800	6.9%
Spina Bifida	1,800	1.8%
Cystic Fibrosis	1,200	1.2%
Muscular Dystrophy	1,200	1.2%
Migraines	9,400	9.6%
Arthritis or rheumatism	2,900	3.0%
Paralysis of any kind	3,700	3.8%
Missing or malformed arms, legs, fingers or toes	4,300	4.4%
Fetal Alcohol Syndrome	4,000	4.1%
Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) or Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)	43,700	44.6%
Down Syndrome	3,600	3.7%
Complex medical care needs	8,900	9.1%
Any other long-term condition that has been diagnosed by a health professional	39,000	39.8%

* A child can report more than one chronic condition; therefore, the percentages may add up to more than 100.
Source: 2001 PALS

Severity of disability

Different severity of disability scales were constructed for children under age 5 and children aged 5 to 14.

Children under age 5 with disabilities are described as having a mild to moderate disability or a severe to very severe disability. More than half (57%) have a mild to moderate disability (see Table 7).

The severity scale for children aged 5 to 14 is divided into four groups: mild, moderate, severe, and very severe. Again, more than half (57%) have a mild to moderate disability (see Table 7).

Table 7 Number of children under 15 years old, by age group and severity of disability, 2001

Severity of disability	From birth to 4 years		5 to 14 years	
	(#)	(%)	(#)	(%)
Total	25,800	100.0%	150,000	100.0%
Mild to moderate	14,800	57.4%	86,000	57.3%
Mild	na	na	48,100	32.1%
Moderate	na	na	37,900	25.3%
Severe to very severe	11,000	42.6%	64,100	42.7%
Severe	na	na	38,400	25.6%
Very severe	na	na	25,600	17.1%

Source: 2001 PALS

Housing characteristics of children under 15 years old who are living in a household in core housing need

About 19% of children under 15 years old with disabilities live in a household in core housing need, compared to about 14% of children without disabilities (see Table 8). The highest incidence (25%) of children with disabilities living in a household in core housing need is in Newfoundland and Labrador and the lowest is in New Brunswick at 14%. In all provinces, children with disabilities are more likely to be living in a household in core housing need than children without disabilities.

Table 8 Children under 15 years old living in a household in core housing need, by disability status, in Canada and the provinces, 2001

	with disabilities		without disabilities	
	(#)	(%)	(#)	(%)
Canada	33,800	19.2%	713,800	13.8%
Newfoundland and Labrador	700	25.0%	11,000	13.4%
Prince Edward Island	*	*	2,000	8.0%
Nova Scotia	1,500	24.6%	22,200	14.4%
New Brunswick	600	14.0%	10,800	8.8%
Quebec	4,400	16.4%	144,400	11.8%
Ontario	15,100	19.9%	320,400	15.3%
Manitoba	1,500	20.3%	25,100	14.4%
Saskatchewan	1,200	22.6%	18,200	12.8%
Alberta	3,300	15.0%	54,600	10.8%
British Columbia	5,300	21.5%	105,100	16.2%

* Number suppressed because of sample size.
Source: 2001 PALS

Urban/Rural

The incidence of children under 15 years old with disabilities living in a household in core housing need is higher in urban areas (at about 20%) than in rural areas (at about 15%) (see Table 9).

Table 9 Children under 15 years old living in a household in core housing need, by disability status, Canada and the provinces, 2001

	with disabilities		without disabilities	
	(#)	(%)	(#)	(%)
Total	33,800	19.2%	713,800	13.8%
Rural	4,800	14.6%	89,400	9.1%
Urban	29,000	20.3%	624,400	14.9%

Source: 2001 PALS

Research Highlight

2001 Participation and Activity Limitation Survey: Issue 9—Profile of the Housing Conditions of Canadian Children with Disabilities

Tenure

About 39% of children under 15 years old with disabilities who live in rental accommodations are living in a household in core need, compared to about 8% of those with disabilities who live in a dwelling owned by a member of the family (see Table 10). A similar comparison is noted among children without disabilities (34% compared to 6%).

Table 10 Children under 15 years old living in a household in core housing need, by disability status and tenure, 2001

	with disabilities		without disabilities	
	(#)	(%)	(#)	(%)
Total	33,800	19.2%	713,000	13.8%
Rural	8,800	7.8%	227,500	6.1%
Urban	25,000	39.3%	486,300	34.1%

Source: 2001 PALS

Special Features for Access and Egress and Special Features within the Home

Less than 5% of children aged from 5 to 14 years⁶ use and/or need specialized features to access or egress their home; and 9% use and/or need special features inside their residence, including those who use/need grab bars or a lift device in the bathroom.

Demographic and Socio-economic Characteristics of Children under 15 years old and Living in a Household in Core Housing Need

Age and Gender

Regardless of age, children with disabilities are more likely to be living in a household in core housing need than children without disabilities. The incidence of core housing need for those children with disabilities aged 5 to 9 years is 21% compared to 14% for those without disabilities (see Table 11).

Younger girls (those under 10 years old) with disabilities are more likely to be living in core housing need than boys with disabilities. But for children aged from 10 to 14 years old boys with disabilities have a higher incidence of core housing need than girls – 18% versus 17%, respectively.

Table 11 Children under 15 years old living in a household in core housing need, by disability status, sex and age group, 2001

Sex	Age group	with disabilities		without disabilities	
		(#)	(%)	(#)	(%)
Both sexes	Birth to 14 years	33,800	19.2%	713,000	13.8%
	0 - 4	4,800	18.6%	231,600	14.9%
	5 - 9	14,500	21.2%	246,900	13.9%
	10 - 14	14,500	17.7%	235,300	12.8%
Boys	Birth to 14 years	20,900	18.9%	361,900	13.7%
	0 - 4	2,900	18.4%	115,800	14.5%
	5 - 9	8,600	19.6%	127,100	14.0%
	10 - 14	9,400	18.4%	119,000	12.8%
Girls	Birth to 14 years	12,900	19.8%	351,900	13.8%
	0 - 4	1,900	19.0%	115,800	15.2%
	5 - 9	5,900	24.0%	119,800	13.7%
	10 - 14	5,100	16.7%	116,300	12.8%

Source: 2001 PALS

⁶ These questions were not asked of parents/guardians who had a child with a disability who was under five years.

Living Arrangements

About 62% of children with disabilities who are living in a household in core housing need live in a family that is headed by a lone parent, compared to 49% of children without disabilities (see Table 12).

Table 12 Persons aged 65 years and older living in a household in core housing need, by disability status and living arrangements, 2001

	with disabilities		without disabilities	
	(#)	(%)	(#)	(%)
All types of living arrangements	33,800	100.0%	713,800	100.0%
Child living with a married couple	9,500	28.1%	289,000	40.5%
Child living with common-law couple	2,100	6.2%	70,200	9.8%
Child in lone parent family (male parent)	1,500	4.4%	28,700	4.0%
Child in lone parent family (female parent)	19,500	57.7%	318,600	44.6%
Child living as a non-census family person	1,000	3.0%	7,300	1.0%
Living arrangement of child unknown	200	0.6%	100	0.0%

Source: 2001 PALS

Immigrant Status

Among children with disabilities living in a household in core housing need, 6% are immigrants, compared to 12% of children without disabilities (see Table 13).

Table 13 Children under 15 years old living in a household in core housing need, by disability status, immigrant status and age group, 2001

	with disabilities		without disabilities	
	(#)	(%)	(#)	(%)
Total	33,800	100.0%	713,800	100.0%
Non-immigrants	31,800	94.1%	631,700	88.5%
Immigrants	2,000	5.9%	82,100	11.5%

Source: 2001 PALS

Household Income

Regardless of disability status, the majority of children who are living in core housing need live in households in the lowest income quintile. However, a higher proportion of children with disabilities living in a household in core housing need are in the lowest quintile — 84% compared to 77% of children without disabilities (see Table 14).

For the purpose of this analysis, the pre-tax household income of Canadian households with at least one person under 15 years old were assessed and divided into five equally sized income groups or quintiles ranging from lowest income to high income.

High Income: \$93,102 or more
 Upper Income: \$67,061 – 93,101
 Middle Income: \$48,414 – \$67,060
 Moderate Income: \$30,257 – \$48,413
 Lowest Income: Less than \$30,257

Table 14 Children under 15 years old living in a household in core housing need, by disability status and household income quintile, 2001

	with disabilities		without disabilities	
	(#)	(%)	(#)	(%)
Total	33,800	100.0%	713,800	100.0%
High, Upper, Middle (\$48,414 or more)	*	*	10,900	1.5%
Moderate (\$30,257-\$48,413)	5,000	14.8%	152,000	21.3%
Lowest (less than \$30,257)	28,400	84.0%	550,900	77.2%

Source: 2001 PALS

Research Highlight

2001 Participation and Activity Limitation Survey: Issue 9—Profile of the Housing Conditions of Canadian Children with Disabilities

Impact on Parent's Ability to Work Outside the Home

Parents or guardians of about 25% of children who are living in a household in core housing need indicate that money was an issue because of their child's disability. Having a child with a disability impacts on the parents' or another adult family member's decision to work outside the home. The child's disability(ies) often (59% of the respondents) impacted on work-related decisions for at least one family member. Among these 19,900 children with disabilities who are living in a household in core housing need, parents reported that in the case of:

- 61% of the children, at least one parent or family member had not taken a job in order to care for the child;
- 42% of the children, at least one parent or family member had quit working (other than normal parental leave);
- 54% of the children, at least one parent or family member had changed work hours to a different time of day (or night);
- 30% of the children, at least one parent or family member had turned down a promotion or a better job;
- 56% of the children, at least one parent or family member had worked fewer hours; and
- 71% of the children, it was the mother who made adjustments to her working situation.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Children with Disabilities under 15 Years of Age

General Characteristics

- 3% of Canadian children under 15 years old have some level of disability, with the lowest rate in Quebec (2%) and the highest in Alberta (4%).
- Boys are more likely to have a disability than girls (4% versus 3%, respectively).
- The most commonly reported disabilities for children under five are developmental delay (68%) and chronic conditions (62%).
- The two most commonly reported disabilities for children age 5-14 are learning disability and chronic condition, both at 65%.
- Of those children with disabilities who report a chronic condition, asthma or severe allergies that limit the kind or amount of activity that the child can do is reported for 46% of children under five years of age and for 48% of children aged five to 14 years.
- The majority (57%) of children with disabilities have a mild to moderate disability.

Children with Disabilities under 15 Years of Age who are Living in a Household in Core Housing Need

Housing Characteristics

- 19% of children under 15 years old with disabilities live in a household in core housing need, compared to 14% of children without disabilities. The highest incidence (25%) is reported in Newfoundland and Labrador and the lowest (14%) is reported in New Brunswick.
- 20% of children with disabilities who live in urban areas live in a household in core housing need compared to 15% of those living in rural areas. These incidences are higher than the 15% and 9%, respectively, for urban and rural children without disabilities.
- 39% of children with disabilities who live in rental accommodations live in a household in core housing need compared to 8% of children who live in a dwelling owned by a family member.

Demographic and Socio-Economic Characteristics

- Regardless of age, children with disabilities are more likely to live in a household in core housing need than children without disabilities.
- 62% of children with disabilities who are living in a household in core housing need live in a family headed by a lone-parent.
- 84% of children with disabilities living in a household in core housing need come from a household in the lowest income quintile (less than \$30,257 in 2000).
- For 59% of children with disabilities who are living in a household in core housing need, parents report that there was an impact on their or another family member's decision to work outside the home which tended to reduce family income.

Research Highlight

2001 Participation and Activity Limitation Survey: Issue 9—Profile of the Housing Conditions of Canadian Children with Disabilities

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

CMHC provides funding for housing content on the Census of Canada and on Statistics Canada surveys. Statistics Canada information is used with the permission of Statistics Canada. Users are forbidden to copy and disseminate data for commercial purposes, either in an original or modified form, without the express permission of Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation and, where applicable, Statistics Canada. More information on Statistics Canada data can be obtained from its Regional Offices, at <http://www.statcan.gc.ca>, or at 1-800-263-1136.

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Printed in Canada
Produced by CMHC

01-10-10

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